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Anna Thompson in a Senior Piano Recital

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Anna Thompson in a Senior Piano Recital

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements of the University Honors Program
of Loyola Marymount University

by

Anna Thompson, Dr. Wojciech Kocyan (Mentor)

9 May, 2019



College of Communication and Fine Arts | Department of Music

PRESENT

ANNA THOMPSON

PIANO

in a Senior Recital

featuring works by

Bach, Beethoven, Prokofiev, Debussy, & Liszt

Saturday, April 27, 2019 | 2 p.m.

Acknowledgements

Timothy Law Snyder
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Upcoming Events

All concerts are free and held at Murphy Recital Hall except where indicated.
Parking is free on weekends.

Chamber Orchestra Concert

Saturday, April 27, 2019 | 8 p.m.

Senior Recital: Daniel Ostrander, tenor

Sunday, April 28, 2019 | 4 p.m.

Student Soloists Recital and Department of Music Awards

Sunday, April 28, 2019 | 7:30 p.m.

54th Annual Spring Choral: *The Finale*

Friday, May 3, 2019 | 8 p.m.
Sacred Heart Chapel
cfa.lmu.edu/tickets

Choruses European Tour, England and Paris: *The Grand Finale*

June 10-20, 2019
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Anna Thompson

piano

in a Senior Recital

Saturday, April 27, 2019 | 2 p.m.
Murphy Recital Hall



Anna Thompson Program Notes

Bach Prelude and Fugue in c minor BWV 847 from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I

The *Well-Tempered Clavier* is one of the biggest triumphs of classical music. Both books are comprised of Preludes and Fugues in the 24 major and minor keys, totaling 48. Bach wrote the first book in response to a new tuning system that was becoming popular in his time, known as well-temperament (and was a predecessor of modern tuning, equal temperament). Previously, tuning was done in such a way to only sound 'correct' in certain keys, so composers were restricted by the way in which their instrument was tuned. Notes were subsequently tuned slightly off from 'perfect' so as to blend with other notes without blatant detection of slightly off intonations. They are so slight so as to hardly be noticed by the average ear, and it became the standard of tuning during Bach's era. The WTC was repeated later in Bach's life with an entire second book.

The c minor prelude moves in perpetual motion for the first half in an unrelenting broken chord structure. Suddenly, the chords become ascending arpeggios where the piece feels unstable for the first time. That instability is quelled by a solid single G in the left hand followed by a presto section that flies to a triumphant end. The fugue begins with a simple theme that will be alternated between hands across the entire piece. The work is a complicated and mathematical piece that, despite its technicality, can also be enjoyed for its simplicity.

Beethoven Sonata No. 8 in c minor, op. 13 ("*Pathétique*")

The *Grande Sonate Pathétique* was one of young Ludwig van Beethoven's first great successes. His close friend and fellow musician Anton Schindler spoke of the *Pathétique* performed by Beethoven, saying "What the *Sonate Pathétique* was in the hands of Beethoven (although he left something to be desired as regards clean playing) was something that one had to have heard, and heard again, in order to be quite certain that it was the same already well-known work. Above all, every single thing became, in his hands, a new creation, wherein his always legato playing, one of the particular characteristics of his execution, formed an important part." Indeed, the *Pathétique* was so popular, it was given its name almost immediately to express the emotions, or pathos, that are elicited by listening to it. The piece became beloved almost immediately, and marked the beginning of a monumental career that would shake the world of music.

Beethoven is best known for bridging the gap between the Classical and Romantic eras. This transition included a lengthening of musical lines; in the Classical era, it was common for ideas or motives to be in relatively short parts that did not cross over the measure line. However, Beethoven's later works began to push this boundary and executed phrases that went on for several measures. This would later be the foundation that was built upon by composers such as

Chopin, who took these Romantic phrases even further to broad sweeping lines intended to elicit the swelling of emotions.

The Grande Sonate *Pathétique* is in three movements. Despite the movements forming a coherent whole, they dramatically contrast in tone and quality. The first movement is in classical sonata form—namely, exposition, development, and recapitulation— and is iconic for its grand and ominous opening. This stands in stark contrast with the second movement, whose melody has remained timeless in its accessibility. In fact, noted singer Billy Joel wrote the popular song “This Night” using the melody from this movement. Finally, the third movement begins with a fast and exciting opening phrase that is revisited three times throughout the work and is broken up with contrasting B and C sections. This is the movement that will most likely be stuck in your head for hours after this performance!

Prokofiev: Sonata No. 3 in a minor, op. 28

Though it can be said for every composer, it is especially true that Prokofiev was deeply influenced by the politics surrounding him. Prokofiev lived most of his creative life in Soviet Russia, where all artistic forms were heavily regulated by an oppressive and restrictive regime following a terrible civil war. Prokofiev lived through the reign of Joseph Stalin, and the two actually died on the same day (March 5, 1953). It is speculated that Prokofiev became more sympathetic to Western ideologies when he lived in the United States during his young adult life. He did return to his home country with a propensity to show heavily masked dissent in his music for the government of the USSR and subsequent Russia.

Prokofiev himself premiered the 3rd Piano Sonata on April 15, 1918 in St. Petersburg. His preceding two sonatas were lauded for their humorous tone, but the third was seen as a departure because of its lyricism and contrastingly unrelenting, motoric passages. Most notably, the piece is an entire sonata in a single movement. One could be left reeling as the sudden unexpected switches of mood turn on the head of a pin. One moment can make the audience recall their respective homes far away, the next second can be an unrelenting hammering in the lowest register of the piano, eliciting a whiplash-like effect. To best enjoy the heavily dissonant sounds of Prokofiev that may initially deter someone from his work, I recommend stepping back and aurally “crossing one's eyes”; something simultaneously complex, challenging, and beautiful may become more clear.

Debussy: Étude No. 4 (“Pour les sixtes”) from Douze Études

In 1915, Debussy wrote 12 Etudes that are significantly less well-known than his other piano works. They were written in the small seaside city of Pourville, France when Debussy had a slight remission of cancer, eventually resulting in his death. Though they are less popular in comparison to Debussy’s works such as *The Sunken Cathedral*, these Etudes are exceedingly challenging, beautiful, and intended to strengthen some aspect of a pianist’s technique. Despite the technical difficulty, much of Debussy’s work is categorized by its easily relatable,

diaphanous, and blurred harmonic sound. Notes that were not commonly placed under the same pedal became increasingly explored, which produces a beautiful and blended effect.

This can certainly be heard throughout this Etude. *Pour les Sixtes* is intended to improve the pianist's double-sixths, a difficult and awkward stretch for the hand. Despite this challenge, the piece sounds calm, muted, and intimate. The opening begins with a slow sequence of sixths that is gently broken in with a left hand simple melody. The piece continues in this calm manner before changing to a rapid right hand passage contrasted with short staccato left hand sequences. Finally, the mysterious and peaceful tone returns to close the ethereal piece.

Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in c-sharp minor

Liszt's second Hungarian Rhapsody is easily his most famous one. This work was written in mid-19th century Europe when there was an increasing trend toward writing music as an homage to one's home country. Though Liszt moved to Paris when he was 16 and spoke relatively poor Hungarian, he was inspired by his native country and chose to integrate traditional Hungarian dance motifs into his works. The 19 Hungarian Rhapsodies, especially this one, were met with adoration and became immediate classics. Liszt himself was well known for his extraordinary charisma during his lifetime. Regularly compared to violin virtuoso Niccolò Paganini, Liszt was a stellar performer who would premiere original compositions that would not be attempted by other pianists for many years.

This Hungarian Rhapsody begins with dramatic chords that quickly transition to a slow-fast-fast left hand rhythm directly coming from a traditional dance known as *Czardas*. The first half alternates between these bold phrases and a sentimental and melancholy melody. The second half begins shrouded in a rolling right hand and quickly turns into the rhythmic and fast-paced portion that has arguably made this piece most famous. Uniquely, the Hungarian Rhapsody allows for the performer to play their own original cadenza near the end of the piece- the one today was written by Liszt for his pupil, Tony Raab. The piece is challenging in both speed and emotional capacity. It is also a joy to play.

Anna Thompson